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Yes, David defeated Goliath



“David against Goliath” “Few Against Many” was one of the ethos on which the story of Israel was built upon. The idea that the young and small state of Israel succeeded





New Historians said that Israel had the advantage both in manpower and in arms, and denied what they regarded as the myth of a heroic liberation war of the few against the many and so, to try to conclude that the 1948 war was not a war for the survival of the Jewish people against aggressive Arab armies, And so it contributes in a sense to the Nakba narrative.

On the surface, it seems that the facts supporting this assertion, just looks at the manpower of both sides, it is clear that the Israeli side had a much greater manpower over its enemies.

Strength	
Israel: 29,677 (initially) 117,500 (finally) ^[Note 1]	Egypt: 10,000 initially, rising to 20,000 ^[citation needed]
	Transjordan: 7,500– 10,000 ^{[10][11]}
	Iraq: 2,000 initially, ^[10] rising to 15,000– 18,000 ^[citation needed]
	Syria: 2,500 ^[citation needed] – 5,000 ^[10]
	Lebanon: 436 ^[12]
	Saudi Arabia: 800–1,200 (Egyptian command)
	Yemen: 300 ^[citation needed]
	Arab Liberation Army: 3,500–6,000.
	Total: 13,000 (initial)



So is this the truth? Was the State of Israel really more powerful than its enemies at the time of its establishment?

Manpower and actual Fighters

Here’s a small detail that most of those “new historians” do not give so much attention to:

3,500–6,000. Total: 13,000 (initial) 51,100 (minimum) 63,500 (maximum) ^[Note 2]		Strength	
At maximum, not half of the forces of the Israelis but these numbers include only the combat units sent to the former mandate-territory of Palestine, not the entire military strength. ^[9]		Israel: 29,677 (initially) 117,500 (finally) ^[Note 1]	Egypt: 10,000 initially, rising to
This includes the entire military personnel count – both combat units and logistical units. ^[9]			

As Yoav Gelber explained, This statistic, however, is somewhat misleading.

The Israeli figures included the IDF’s entire logistic infrastructure, which lacked a parallel among the invaders whose supply depots and base installations remained at home [1]

Asaf Agin explains that in the absence of preliminary sources, the researchers relied in their calculations on the “conscripts” of the IDF and these distorted the picture since the “services” component was not taken into account. For example, at the end of July 1948, only 42% of the conscripts were field troops and more than 25% were service (logistics, support, clerical, etc.). At the same time, the Arab’s data were the full fighters and hence a sharp distortion in the assessment of the balance of power [2]

Another breakdown of the forces shows that only some of the recruits were actual fighters [3]



תאריך	מספר מגויסים כללי	מגויסי חיל רגלים, פלמ"ח ושריון בחטיבות		מגויסים בחילות מקצועיים לוחמים (אוויר, ים, תותחנים, הנדסה)	שיעור המשובצים בכל החילות הלוחמים מתוך המספר הכולל של המגויסים ב-%
		מספרים	%		
1 באפריל 1948	21,775	15,815	73	אין נתונים מדויקים	גדול מ-73
22 במאי 1948	35,780	21,967	61	3,432	71
25 ביוני 1948	54,486	27,106	50	6,134	61
8 ביולי 1948	59,161	26,995	45	7,615	56
17 ביולי 1948	63,586	27,428	43.3	8,235	56

Recruited from April 1, 1948 to July 17, from right to left, The total number of recruits, how many of them were field fighters and their general numerical ratio

On April 1, 1948. The Jewish Defensive Force had a total of 21,775 conscripts, of which 15,815 were field fighters.

On July 17' it was 63,586, of which 27,428 were field fighters.

When considering this data, the result looks like this:

יחסי הכוחות בחזית ארץ ישראל בין מחצית מרס ל-23 ביולי 1948

Arabs															ערבים
23/7	17/7	9/7	3/7	25/6	11/6	4/6	28/5	21/5	15/5	7/5	21/4	15/4	8/4	15/3	לבנון
2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	0	0	0	0	0	סוריה
3,250	3,250	3,250	3,250	3,250	3,250	3,250	2,750	2,750	2,750	0	0	0	0	0	עיראק
7,350	7,350	7,350	7,350	7,350	7,350	7,350	5,100	2,700	2,700	0	0	0	0	0	עבה"י
6,500	6,500	6,500	6,500	6,500	6,500	6,500	6,500	6,500	6,500	0	0	0	0	0	מצרים
6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	5,500	0	0	0	0	0	צ. הליגה
5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	3,500	3,500	5,000	5,000	4,000	3,250	2,500	מתנדבים
1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	2,500	2,500	750	750	500	מקומיים
10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	סה"כ
41,600	41,600	41,600	41,600	41,600	41,600	41,600	38,850	34,950	36,450	19,500	19,500	16,750	16,000	15,000	

Jews															צה"ל
23/7	17/7	9/7	3/7	25/6	11/6	4/6	28/5	21/5	15/5	7/5	21/4	15/4	8/4	15/3	ח"ש
28,229	27,613	26,985	26,832	26,181	24,340	19,373	17,846	17,962	17,138	17,002	16,621	16,086	15,815	14,772	ח"מ
4,780	4,750	4,650	4,020	3,830	3,625	3,025	3,130	3,120	2,930	2,240	1,950	1,500	1,600	980	חילות
3,650	3,470	3,320	2,915	2,930	2,390	2,015	1,040	900	795	640	550	320	225	195	מורשים
1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	סה"כ
38,159	37,333	36,455	35,267	34,241	31,855	25,913	23,516	23,482	22,363	21,382	20,621	19,406	19,140	17,447	

Asaf Agin's data [2]





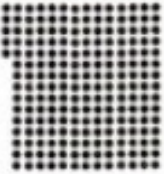
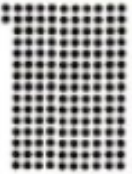
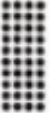
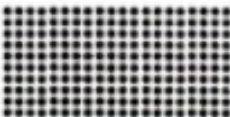
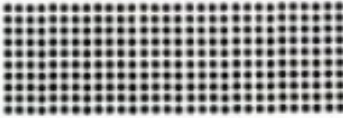
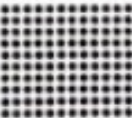
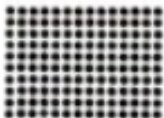
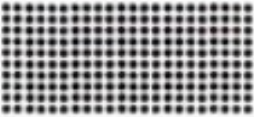
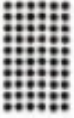
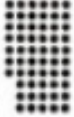
What the numbers do not include is “Faza”, The Faza’a militia was the system where an Arab sheikh could call up the males in his district for attack or defence, The potential numbers are estimated at 50,000, but most of their activities was limited to their village area[4]

Arm Balance

At its first session on May 16, the provisional Israeli government heard prime minister and minister of defense David Ben-Gurion offer a stark survey of the military situation. “The number of [Jewish] recruits has exceeded 30,000, but only 40% of them are armed due to the lack of rifles,” he told his colleagues. “The [Arabs] are using artillery, aircraft and tanks, while we have a single tank and a number of [captured] British armored cars.” Ben-Gurion was confident that Israel would be able to turn the tables on the invading armies after the arrival of newly bought weapons. Until that happened, he anticipated a period of great uncertainty. “In my opinion we’ll be able to teach them a lesson they’ll remember for generations,” he said. “But for the time being the situation is extremely serious.” [5]





Arab armies	IDF	
 30,000 + 10,000 Locals	 30,573 *	 manpower
 40	* 1 (ללא תותח)	 Tanks
 200	: 2	 Cannon-bearing armor
 300	 120	 Armor
 140	: 5	 Field guns
 220	 24	 Anti-tank guns
 60		 fighter jets
 14		 Bombers
 57	 28	 Transport aircraft
 12	: 3	 Armed ships



Israel suffered from a lack of heavy equipment from the start of the war. According to Morris, the Israelis had 12 armored cars of which four had canon, three tanks, three half-tracks and three patrol vessels. By the end of May Israel had acquired 10 additional tanks and about a dozen half tracks. Morris credits Israeli forces with about “one hundred armored trucks and personnel carriers,” but most of these, he admits were homemade vehicles created by “armor” plating trucks.

The Arab armies, according to Morris, had about 75 combat aircraft, 40 tanks, 500 armored vehicles, 140 field guns and 220 anti-aircraft and anti-tank guns. [7]

Morris also tells us that by July the Israelis had about 300 armored cars and half-tracks, 15 tanks, 150 artillery pieces and over a dozen fighter aircraft including Spitfires and Messerschmitt 109s (or Avia — a Czech imitation), as well as 16 bombers and 50 light and transport planes. while the Egyptians had at least 132 light tanks and 3 Sherman tanks, and the Syrians had 45 Renault R-35 and R-39 light tanks. [8]

Examples from the field

A collection of anecdotes that shows what was the state of balance of power in the war:

The Jewish Quarter in Jerusalem

For Jews:

Manpower: 200

Machine guns: 2

Mortars: 1

Shells: 95

Cannons:0

Armored:0

For Arabs:

Manpower: 700 + Hundreds of gang members

Machine guns: 25





Armored: 4

[9]

הערבים	אנשי הרובע	
700+מאות אנשי כנופיות	200	כוח אדם
25 לפחות	2	מקלעים
6 (4 מהן כבדות)	1	מרגמות
2000	95	פגזים למרגמה
12	0	תותחים
4	0	משוריינים

מתוך : לויצה - "9 קבין"

Haifa

The British estimated that in the battle for Haifa, some '2,000' Arab militiamen were set against '400 trained Jews backed by an indeterminate number of reserves [10]

Battle of Mishmar HaEmek

On 4 April 1948, about 1,000 Arab Liberation Army (ALA) militiamen launched an attack on the kibbutz.[11] They were initially opposed by 170 Jews and later, two companies of the Palmach, "less than 300 boys." [12]

Battles of the Kinarot Valley

On May 20,

Some 380 Jewish fighters stopped an attack of 1,500 Syrian soldiers armed with 12 tanks and 18 armored vehicles [13]





Conclusion

Contrary to the claims of the “Mythbusters”, the young state of Israel really had to survive an attack by Arab armies with a quantitative and qualitative advantage, in manpower and arms.

Against all odds.

[1] Yoav Gelber, *Palestine 1948*, 2006 pg 12

[2] הקרב האחרון להצלת מיתוס “דוד מול גוליית” במלחמת השחרור

[3] 1949–1947) (ההיסטוריה של ארץ-ישראל, כרך עשירי: מלחמת העצמאות By Yehoshua Ben-Arieh





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- [5] Palestine betrayed by Karsh Efraim pg 236
- [6] פלישת הצבאות הסדירים של מדינות ערב - 15/5/48
- [7] Righteous Victims by Morris, Benny, Alfred Knopf, 1999. pg 217
- [8] 1948–49 War of Independence Arab TO&E
- [9] הרובע היהודי במלחמת השחרור
- [10] Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited by Benny Morris pg 192
- [11] Chaim Herzog (1982). *The Arab-Israeli wars: war and peace in the Middle East*. Arms & Armour Press. p. 27
- [12] Kimche, J. (1950). Seven fallen pillars pg 215
- [13] Valley at war by Assaf Agin pg 241

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